



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
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FORMER ADVOCATES OF SPRING SHOOTING  
NOW APPROVE STAND OF BIOLOGICAL SURVEY

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Perpetuation of hunting as a sport as well as the conservation of game is the significance back of a letter just received by the Chief of the Biological Survey of the United States Department of Agriculture, from a prominent sportsman of Alton, Ill., in which the writer, acknowledging in true sportsman-like fashion that he had been wrong and the Biological Survey right, announces conversion from his former pronounced advocacy of spring shooting. The letter, which is typical of many others received by the bureau, contains the following interesting statements:

"The members of our club are all prominent business men of Alton, Ill.

Some of them are enthusiastic duck hunters and at one time were bitterly opposed to the Federal laws prohibiting spring duck shooting. But time has demonstrated that we were wrong, and I am safe in saying that 'there is more joy over one sinner that repenteth than over a hundred already in the fold.' I am in a better position to watch the increase of ducks since spring shooting was abolished, and also their fall flights, than most men, for I retired from active business several years ago and now spend most of my time fishing and hunting. Any time I can be of service to you, command me."

The frank and friendly spirit back of the letter shows the fairmindedness of the true sportsman, and at the same time does not attempt to hide the fact that the recent conversion is on practical grounds. Once bitterly opposed to the operation of the Federal law, he has become convinced of its necessity by the outcome, and now is as strongly opposed to spring shooting as once he was in favor of it.

A few years ago this correspondent was a member of delegations of hunters from several Middle-Western States appearing before Congressional committees and officials of the Department of Agriculture seeking to change the policy of abolishing spring shooting. The plea then made was that fall shooting was so inadequate that sportsmen were entitled to another season at the time the birds were on their northward way in the spring. Sportsmen throughout the country generally have now come to realize that by a proper conservation of game they are fostering their own best interests. The changing sentiment means not only that wild fowl may now go to their breeding places unmolested, so that the species may be perpetuated by the survivors of fall hunting and of the rigors of the migrations; it means also that the birds, being allowed to enter the breeding season without the spring slaughter, have so increased in numbers that there is ample shooting in fall.

The policy of the Biological Survey, which has been maintained after a careful study of the migratory bird situation from every angle and after consultation with sportsmen of national reputation, has overcome the two greatest obstacles to the perpetuation of our game birds -- the sale of game and spring shooting -- both of which are now prohibited throughout the United States. This policy was opposed at the start by some sportsmen of the Mississippi Valley States, chiefly centering in Missouri and Illinois. It was in this area that test cases arose to overthrow the original Federal migratory-bird law, and thus it is all the more gratifying to conservationists to find that some of their once most bitter opponents have now become their friends, frankly acknowledging that the stand maintained by the Biological Survey throughout the controversy was right.